



## ***Discussion Guide – Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Focus Groups***

***November 6 to 13, 2015***

Thank you for coming this afternoon/evening. My name is Dave Belin and I will be moderating the focus group discussion today. I work with RRC Associates, a third-party opinion research and city planning firm in Boulder. We have been in business in Boulder since 1983. These groups are being conducted on behalf of the City of Boulder and Boulder County, though there is no one here from the City or County. I'm here to ask a few questions and then listen.

This focus group is one of six being held to get more detailed feedback about some of the topics in the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan survey. The results of the survey and these focus groups will be presented to City Council and Planning Board (as well as the County), and be part of the input for the update of the Comp Plan.

My intention is to get your feedback on some high level issues and some tradeoffs, and not to get into too many details and/or specifics.

We have several topics to discuss, and I want to be sure that everyone has a chance to speak. Please be mindful of the time you are talking and make sure you leave time for others to comment. There are no right or wrong answers, and I'm interested in your honest opinions. If you agree with something that someone else said, that's okay, and if you disagree that's okay too, as long as we have a civil conversation.

These sessions are being audio recorded so that we can go back and write up a summary of what we heard, although everyone's names will remain confidential. We have an hour and a half. (Additionally: acknowledge maps; have original survey forms available to hand out for reference if needed)

### **1) Introduction (5 minutes, 5:35 to 5:40)**

Let's start by going around the room and briefly introducing yourself to the group. Please tell us your name and a little bit about you – where do you live, how long have you lived in the Boulder Valley, and something about yourself – your family, your job, your hobbies?

**2) Right Direction/Wrong Direction (15 minutes, 5:40 to 5:55)**

One of the initial questions on the survey asked whether you thought, in terms of growth, development, and design, the community was generally heading in the right direction, the wrong direction, or if you had a mixed reaction – that in some ways things are heading in the right direction and in equally important ways the wrong direction. The results were interesting, with some saying right direction, some saying wrong direction, and the majority indicating a mixed reaction.

In trying to understand these responses in more detail, I wonder if you can share how you feel about this question. Let's start with things that are heading in the right direction; can you provide some specific examples of aspects of growth, development or design you feel are headed in the right direction? And how about the wrong direction in Boulder? [PROBE FOR ADDITIONAL DETAIL WHERE APPROPRIATE – WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT? CAN YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT THAT? CAN YOU GIVE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES? Allow for responses that are about other issue areas that people may feel are heading in the right or wrong direction (without getting into the weeds)]

**3) Housing (15 minutes, 5:55 to 6:10)**

One of the things we noticed in the survey responses is that many respondents said that they want the Comp Plan to ensure a diversity of housing types and price ranges (especially affordable housing), and also that the Plan should maintain or increase the potential for additional housing. At the same time, survey results showed that most residents want to retain the current system of limiting the rate of housing growth to about 1% per year or less, with selected exemptions such as for permanently affordable housing and in mixed use projects.

{Background if needed: Currently, the city has about 45,700 housing units, 105,000 people, and close to 100,000 jobs. Based on existing zoning and historic growth rates, the city is projected to add an additional 18,500 jobs and 6,300 housing units over the next 25 years, by 2040. Regarding housing, would you like to maintain the current potential for 6,300 additional housing units over the next 25 years (or about 14 percent more than are here today), or increase or decrease the potential for housing units? Why do you feel that way?}

Do you feel additional emphasis should be placed on increasing the affordability of housing for low and middle income residents? If so, what kinds of actions, policies or tradeoffs do you feel are necessary and acceptable to achieve that? [PROBE] What is acceptable to you in terms of providing a mix of housing, and what is not acceptable to you?

**4) Future growth of jobs (15 minutes, 6:10 to 6:25)**

Another question on the survey asked about the future growth of jobs, and we'd like to probe that topic a little further. {Background if needed: Currently, the city has about 45,700 housing units, 105,000 people, and close to 100,000 jobs. Based on existing zoning and historic growth rates, the city is projected to add an additional 18,500 jobs and 6,300 housing units over the next 25 years, by 2040.}

The Comprehensive Plan currently recognizes the City's role as a major employment center and expects that will continue.

According to survey results, most residents want to let jobs continue to grow, albeit in some cases on a lower trajectory than currently forecast for the future. Regarding jobs, would you like to maintain the current potential for 18,500 additional jobs in the next 25 years (i.e. about 18 percent more jobs than are here today), or increase or decrease the potential for jobs? Why do you feel that way? What tradeoffs do you see with having more jobs in Boulder in the future than today?

**5) Mixed Use (15 minutes, 6:25 to 6:40)**

The survey asked about mixed use development. As you know, mixed use development combines two or more different types of uses, often residential and commercial, in one area. The sentiment from the survey responses was generally in support of mixed use developments located in commercial and industrial areas and along major streets with transit service, although some residents felt that there are positive and negative tradeoffs associated with mixed use development.

In your opinion, what are some of the specific positive and negative aspects of mixed use development? What is acceptable to you and what is not acceptable when it comes to mixed use?

What are some examples of mixed use developments in Boulder that you like? Why? And mixed use developments that you do not like? Why? [PROBE]

**6) Height (15 minutes, 6:40 to 6:55)**

The height of buildings in Boulder was another topic on the survey. The current regulations on height limit all buildings in Boulder to 55 feet, although in most areas of the city, zoning limits the height to 35 or 40 feet unless otherwise approved under a separate process. In some areas,

What is your view on the height of buildings in Boulder? Where in Boulder are taller buildings okay? Where are they not okay? Or are buildings taller than 40 feet never okay? PROBE AND ASK FOR MORE DETAIL.

Thank you very much for coming this afternoon/evening. I appreciate your input and I enjoyed the conversation.

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